

PORTER, HORACE

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# Abraham Lincoln's Contemporaries

Horace Porter

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## Captain Horace Porter

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### Captain Horace Porter (Civil War)

Horace Porter was born in Huntingdon, PA on April 15, 1837. He was the son of David R. Porter, a wealthy ironmaster who later served as Governor of Pennsylvania, and grandson of Andrew Porter (1743-1813), an officer in the Continental Army during the War of Independence. Horace Porter studied for a year (1854) at the Lawrence Scientific School of Harvard University, and then entered the United States Military Academy at West Point. He graduated in 1860, third in his class.

He served in the Union army in the Civil War, reaching the rank of brigadier general. He received the Medal of Honor at the Battle of Chickamauga (September 19–20, 1863). The battle took place approximately three to four miles downstream on the Tennessee River from Chattanooga. On September 20, 1863, Horace Porter was serving as a Captain in the Ordnance Department. His citation that accompanies the award reads "While acting as a volunteer aide, at a critical moment when the lines were broken, rallied enough fugitives to hold the ground under heavy fire long enough to effect the escape of wagon trains and batteries." In the last year of the war, he served as a personal aide to the General-in-Chief Ulysses S. Grant.

From 1869 to 1873, Porter served as Grant's personal secretary in the White House. Horace Porter resigned from the army in December 1873 and became vice president of the Pullman Palace Car Company. He also served in other business enterprises.

In 1892 at the third NSSAR Congress in New York City, Horace Porter was elected President General. He was re-elected four times and is the only man to serve in this position for five years.

From March 1897 to May 1905 he was U.S. Ambassador to France. At his personal expense he conducted (1899-1905) a successful search for the body of John Paul Jones, who had died in Paris in 1792. He received the Grand Cross Legion of Honor from the French government in 1904. For this he received on May 9, 1906 a unanimous vote of thanks of both Houses of Congress, and the privileges of the floor for life. In 1907 he was a member of the American delegation to the Hague Peace Conference.

From 1893 to 1897 Porter was president of the Union League Club of New York. In this position, he was a major force in the construction of Grant's Tomb.

General Porter became well-known as a public speaker, and delivered orations at the dedication of General Grant's tomb in New York, at the centennial of the founding of West Point, and at the re-interment of the body of John Paul Jones at Annapolis. (John Paul Jones was later re-interred in the crypt under the chapel of the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, MD.)

Horace Porter's National number is 4069 and his Empire State Society number is 69. His Patriot ancestor was Andrew Porter who first served as Captain of the Marines onboard the frigate "Effingham" and later as Colonel of the Fourth Pennsylvania Artillery. He signed his application in April 1891. There are two notes on his application. One handwritten note says he was a "dual with the France Society #7." The second note is typewritten and reads "(Past President Gen'l) (Founder of French SAR)."

General Horace Porter died May 25, 1921. He is buried in the Old First Methodist Churchyard, West Long Branch, NJ. Horace Porter authored three books: *West Point Life* (1866) and *Campaigning with Grant* (1897), and *Letter of John Paul Jones* (1905). Compatriot Porter is the only known Medal of Honor recipient to serve as a President General.

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